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The Teaching  
LEGACY

of Derek Prince

Many years ago, in a congregation I was pastoring at the time, I would regularly talk about *my* church. One day the Lord asked me this probing question: “Would you mind telling Me whose church it really is?” His question stopped me in my tracks. I replied, “Lord, I hope it is Your church—but I’m not too sure.” That experience completely cured me of trying to put my label or my ownership on any section of the Church of Jesus Christ.

From Jesus’ perspective, there is only *one* Church on earth. It is not a Catholic church, a Protestant church, a Baptist church, a Presbyterian church, or an Anglican church; it is *His* Church. Furthermore, I believe He is very jealous that it should be His Church, and His alone.

### Whose Church?

The Church belongs to Jesus. With great determination, He is working by His Spirit to bring it back into one unified Body under one Head – Himself. In its current state, however, the Church is divided and resultantly weak. Clearly, this is not what God intended. In this Teaching Legacy letter, *Return to Unity*, we will see that as the present age comes to a close, God is going to bring about the unity we so desperately need. What He will do to bring it about will be astonishing.

### The Place of Unity

How do we get from where we are now to that place of unity? Our starting point will be to look at the example of the early

RETURN TO

UNITY

Church. When I use the phrase, *return to unity*, it implies something that existed beforehand. In fact, in Acts 2:1, we see that the Church began in unity.

*When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*

This phrase, “with one accord,” tells us that they were *united*. The same is true a little further on in the same chapter, after the Holy Spirit had been poured out and multitudes had been converted:



*Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart... (Acts 2:44-47)*

Then, in Acts 4:32, we read these words:

*Now the multitude of those who be-*

*lieved were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.*

Each of these passages makes one point very clear: the early believers were one united body.

### **One Church per City**

We get another glimpse into the unity of the early Church by asking a simple question: How did Paul address his New Testament letters? He wrote to the church in Corinth. He wrote to the church in Thessalonica. He wrote to the church in Philippi. He did not write to the Orthodox church or to the Anglican church or the Catholic church. Paul’s only designation for the Church was the city in which His one Church could be found.

If Paul were alive today and he wrote a letter to the church in Singapore or New York or London, where would his letter be delivered? Who would receive it? I ask this question simply to point out how far we have moved away from the pattern upon which the Church was established.

What steps must we take to remedy the condition of the Church today?

### **Only One Bride**

We need to acknowledge one obvious truth: when Jesus returns, He is coming back for a united Church. He is coming back for a bride. Would you agree with me when I say that Jesus is no bigamist? He is not intending to have two brides. He doesn’t have a Catholic bride and a Protestant bride. Somehow, between now and when Jesus returns, the Church will have to transform itself. We will have to return to unity so that we can be identified as *the Bride of Christ*.



Does this transformation seem so distant from the present situation as to appear impossible and unrealistic? To answer that question, I would simply say what Jesus said: “*With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible*” (Matthew 19:26). My personal conviction is that whenever God has declared He *will* do something, He will do it. I don’t question it. He is able to do everything He has promised to do.

### The Process of Restoration

One very important revelation contained in the book of Acts, chapter 3, is that this present age is going to end with a period called *the restoration of all things*. When people ask what restoration is, here is the definition I give: *restoration is putting things back in the right place and in the right condition*. Restoration signifies what God is going to do with His people.

We see this emphasis on the principle of restoration in the following words from Act 3, which were spoken by Peter to the people of his day.

*“Repent therefore and be converted [turn back to God], that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ [the Messiah], who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive [and retain] until the times of restoration of*

*all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began [since time began]” (Acts 3:19-21).*

Using the key principles of this passage, let’s briefly review four simple stages of God’s process to make the Church and His people ready for the return of the Lord.

Each of these stages begins with the letters *re*:

**1. Repentance.** The first word in the passage above is *repent*, and it is the first step to restoration. Every time God’s people get out of line with His will and out of a right relationship with Him, there is only one unvarying requirement: *repentance*. We can never bypass repentance. We must remember that repentance is not an emotion. It is a decision. You say, “Here I am, God. I’m yours. Tell me what to do.”

**2. Refreshing.** Once we repent, we begin to experience *refreshing*. We begin to come alive. Life becomes exciting again. The Christian life, when approached with the right attitude, is never boring. If your experience is boring and monotonous, you need to be refreshed. In order to be refreshed, you need to repent.

**3. Restoration.** Refreshing is intended by God to lead to *restoration*. Some Christians who have experienced the refreshing of the Holy Spirit have considered it the end rather than the means. It isn’t! It is helpful

encouragement from God to move us closer to His end, which is restoration.

**4. Return.** Let's look again at Acts 3:20-21: "...and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things." Somewhere in this period of restoration, we can expect the fourth word beginning with *re*. Although it is not in the text, it is implicit: return. Jesus is coming back!

### Fulfilling His Promise

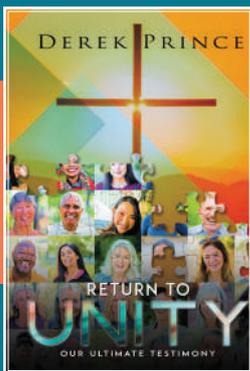
Here, then, is the order of the process that brings us into unity: repentance, refreshing, restoration, and return. Right now, I believe we are in a period of restoration when much is being brought back to the Church. I believe the most important treasure God intends to restore is the unity of the Church. When we see restoration and unity in that context, what appeared hopeless or impossible can be transformed into a reality for us. Unity is one of the final purposes of God in restoration.



Let's pray together for that unity, right now:

*Dear Lord,*

*We thank You that we are in a time of restoration. Please forgive us for our part in the disunity that has existed in Your Church up until now. Help us to love one another with sincere hearts, so that the world will come to know, to love, and to glorify Jesus, Your Son, in whose Name we pray. Amen.*



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*Return to Unity*

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